WE CLAIM:

- 1. An isolated nucleic acid molecule which encodes a soluble protein which binds to IL-TIF/IL-22, wherein the complimentary nucleotide sequence of said isolated nucleic acid molecule, hybridizes, under stringent conditions, to SEQ ID NO: 5 or SEQ ID NO: 10.
- 2. The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, wherein said isolated nucleic acid molecule encodes a protein, the amino acid sequence of which is set forth in SEQ ID NO: 6 or SEQ ID NO: 11.
- 3. The isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, comprising the nucleotide sequence set forth at SEQ ID NO: 5 or SEQ ID NO: 10.
- 4. Expression vector comprising the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, operably linked to a promoter.
- 5. Expression vector comprising the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 2, operably linked to a promoter.
- 6. Expression vector comprising the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 3, operably linked to a promoter.
- 7. Recombinant cell line or cell strain, transformed or transfected with the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1.
- 8. Recombinant cell line or cell strain, transformed or transfected with the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 2.
- 9. Recombinant cell line or cell strain, transformed or transfected with the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 3.
- 10. Recombinant cell line or cell strain, transformed or transfected with the expression vector of claim 4.

20

5

#25044722v1<

and a

ini

20

5

- 11. Recombinant cell line or cell strain, transformed or transfected with the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 5.
- 12. Recombinant cell line or cell strain, transformed or transfected with the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 6.
- 13. Isolated, soluble binding protein which binds to IL-TIF/IL-22, having a molecular weight of from about 23 to about 40 kilodaltons, as determined by SDS-PAGE.
- 14. The isolated soluble protein of claim 13, comprising the amino acid sequence set forth at SEQ ID NO: 6 or SEQ ID NO: 11.
- 15. A method for inhibiting effect of IL-TIF/IL-22 on a cell, comprising contacting said IL-TIF/IL-22 with the soluble protein of claim 13 in an amount sufficient to bind to and antagonize said IL-TIF/IL-22.
- 16. A method for determining if IL-TIF/IL-22 is present in a sample, comprising contacting said sample with the protein of claim 13, and determining binding of said protein to IL-TIF/IL-22 as a determination of IL-TIF/IL-22 in said sample.
- 17. A method for producing a soluble, IL-22/IL-TIF binding protein comprising transforming or transfecting a cell with the isolated nucleic acid molecule of claim 1, culturing the thus transformed or transfected cell to produce said soluble binding protein, and isolating it from said cell.
- 18. A method for producing a soluble, IL-TIF/IL-22 binding protein, comprising transforming or transfecting a cell with the expression vector of claim 4, culturing the thus transformed or transfected cell to produce said soluble binding protein containing antagonist, and isolating it from said cell.
- 19. The isolated, soluble binding protein of claim 13, further comprising a detectable label.

- 20. The isolated, soluble binding protein of claim 13, wherein said soluble binding protein is an antagonist for IL-TIF/IL-22.
- 21. Isolated antibody which specifically binds to the binding protein of claim 13.
- 22. The antibody of claim 21, wherein said antibody is monoclonal antibody.
- 23. Hybridoma cell line which produces the monoclonal antibody of claim 22.
- 24. A method for determining presence of a soluble, protein which binds to IL-TIF/IL-22, comprising contacting said sample with the antibody of claim 21, and determining binding of said antibody to said soluble, binding protein as a determination of presence of said soluble, binding protein in said sample.
- 25. The method of claim 24, wherein said antibody is labeled with a detectable label.
- 26. A method for determining expression of nucleic acid molecule which encodes a protein antagonist of IL-TIF/IL-22 binding protein in a sample, comprising contacting said sample with an oligonucleotide which hybridizes specifically, under stringent conditions to the nucleotide sequence of SEQ ID NO: 5 or SEQ ID NO: 10, hybridization thereto being indicative of expression of said nucleic acid molecule.
- 27. An isolated oligonucleotide consisting of from 17 to 100 contiguous nucleotides of SEQ ID NO: 5 or SEQ ID NO: 10.
- 28. An isolated protein which binds to IL-TIF/IL-22, produced by the method of claim 17.
- 29. An isolated protein which binds to IL-TIF/IL-22, produced by the method of claim 18.
- 30. A method for inhibiting binding of IL-TIF/IL-22 to a binding partner, comprising adding an amount of the isolated binding protein of claim 13 to a sample containing IL-TIF/IL-ss and a binding partner therefor, sufficient to inhibit said binding.

5

25

20